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ABSTRACT

One hundred thirty-five Japanese university students participated in a study of attitudes toward the physically handicapped. Results supported the hypothesis that the attitudes of the nonhandicapped toward physically handicapped persons with desirable personality traits were more positive than attitudes toward those with undesirable personality traits. Females showed a consistently more positive attitude. The degree of social contact with physically handicapped persons was not found to have a significant effect on attitudes. (CL)

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ATTITUDES OF STUDENTS TOWARD THE PERSONALITY OF THE HANDICAPPED

---- A COMPARISON OF THE DIFFERENCE IN CHARACTER AND BEHAVIOR OF THE PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED ----

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In Japan, recently, the understanding or consciousness of the whole society toward the physically handicapped has considerably improved. However, the non-handicapped have not developed a true understanding or acceptance of the handicapped on an emotional level. To improve this condition, needless to say, the various factors of non-handicapped must be considered; however, to consider the factors on the opposite side (the handicapped) is also important. Most of all, the factor for the physically handicapped to be considered is their characters and behaviors as shown to the non-handicapped.

There are many previous studies of the non-handicapped attitudes toward the handicapped (Oshi:1967, Ojima et al:1967, Takase et al: 1968, Misawa:1971, Masson,R.L.:1963, Tseng,M.S.:1972, Yuker, H.E. et al:1970, Lazar, A.L.:1978). But these have been studied from the non-handicapped point of view. So this study has investigated the point of view of the physically handicapped which has not been taken into consideration in the above.

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Purpose

The purpose of this study was to make clear the difference of the attitudes of the non-handicapped toward the desirable or undesirable personality traits (the character and behavior) of the physically handicapped. So the following hypothesis was set up.

Hypothesis: In the case of the physically handicapped, those who have socially acceptable personality traits are more faborable (positive) than those who have undesirable ones.

And, then, this hypothesis was investigated, taking into consideration the sex of the non-handicapped and the degree of their social contacts with the physically handicapped.

Method

1. Materials

Two types of 8 mm films with sound were used as the stimuli; one film showed a physically handicapped person with undesirable personality traits (A series), the other showed a physically handicapped person with desirable personality traits (B series). These personality traits were difined as shown in table 1. In the two films, one of the authors (Ishikawa), a cerebral palsied, played the leading part. The validity of the two films were confirmed in a pilot study.

2. Subjects and Procedure

The Japanese translation of the ATDP Scale (Attitudes Toward Disabled Scale) by Yuker and others was used to measure attitudes of the non-handicapped. This scale was administered to 135 students of

The University of Tsukuba, and these students were divided into three groups as indicated in Table 2. That is, Group A was shown the film on undesirable traits (A series), Group B was shown the film on desirable traits (B series) and Groups C was the control group, in which no film was shown. Each subject was given the ATDP Scale and the degree of social contacts was also checked. By coincidence, the three groups had the same degree of social contacts.

Results

1. The total score of the ATDP Scale became significantly higher in the following order; Group B>Group C>Group A (see table 3, Fig 1). The hypothesis was shown to be correct; that is, the attitudes of the non-handicapped toward the physically handicapped with desirable personality traits (Group B) were favored more than toward those who have undesirable personality traits (Group A). Specifically, the difference between Group A and Group B was chiefly the attitudes toward the character of the physically handicapped. There was not a relevant difference between the two groups regarding the attitudes toward social independence, such as labor or marriage, and an unfriendly tendency could be found in both groups.

2. The result of comparing the total score of the ATDP Scale for male and female in each group was that the females consistently showed a higher tendency (see Fig.1), but there was no significant difference.

3. Regarding the degree of social contacts with the physically handicapped, only Group A showed a significant difference among the three groups. It can be said that, in Group A, the attitudes of people

having more social contact with the physically handicapped (high contact group) are more positive toward than people having less contact with them (low contact group). But in Group B and Group C, this result was not applicable. (see Fig.2)

Discussion

1. As the hypothesis was supported, it can be said that if the personality traits of the physically handicapped are desirable, the attitudes of the non-handicapped toward them are more positive than toward the ones with undesirable personality traits. Therefore, it can be considered that personality traits of the physically handicapped are an important factor in improving the attitudes of the non-handicapped toward them.

2. As regarding the result on the degree of social contacts, it was somewhat different from the previous studies (Oshi;1967, Yuker et al: 1970, etc.), which indicate that people having more social contacts with the physically handicapped show more positive attitudes toward them. Considering the result in present study, it can be said that the amount of social contacts (quantity) accentuates people's attitudes (whether positive or negative) toward the physically handicapped, but it does not necessarily lead to positive attitudes. Attitudes are rather influenced by the physically handicapped. And it can be said that one of the important factors in the quality of contact experiences is personality traits of the physically handicapped. It is considered that the attitudes (for example, prejudice) of the non-handicapped toward the physically handicapped will be improved by having more contacts with those have desirable personality traits.

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Conclusion

As long as the physically handicapped and non-handicapped are members of the same society, both groups must be on an equal level. On one hand, the non-handicapped must strive to understand the physically handicapped better. On the other hand, the physically handicapped must develop desirable personality traits and socially acceptable behavior on their own. However, support from parents and therapists is extremely important. The elimination of prejudice towards the physically handicapped and real rehabilitation can be achieved through the interaction of the non-handicapped with the physically handicapped.

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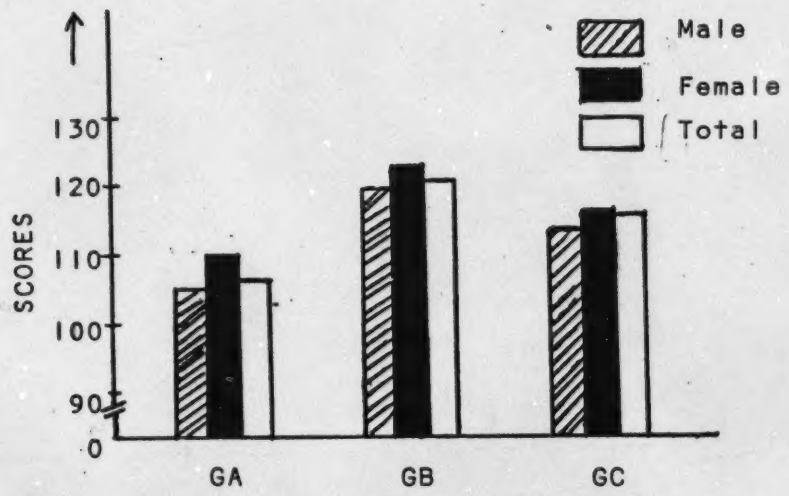

FIGUREI. MEANS OF THE TOTAL SCORE OF THE ATDP SCALE

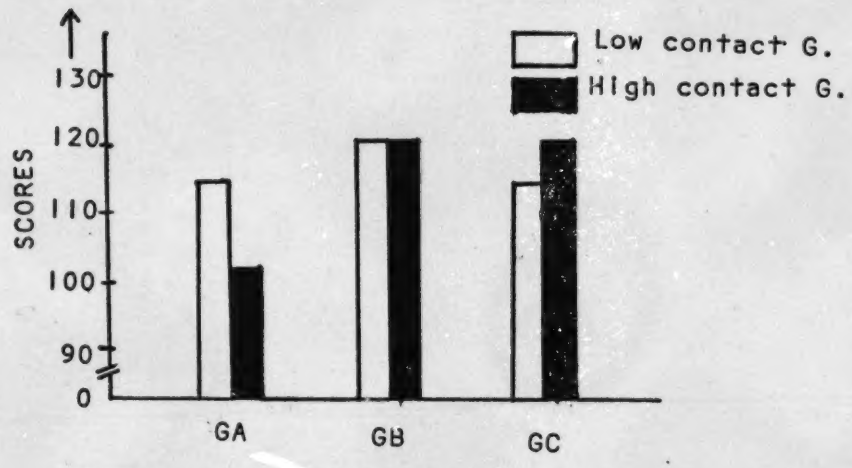

FIGURE 2. MEANS OF THE TOTALSCORE OF THE ATDP SCALE FOR LOW AND HIGH SOCIAL CONTACT

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TABLE 1

DEFINITION OF DESIRABLE AND UNDESIRABLE PERSONALITY TRAITS

Desirable personality traits	Undesirable personality traits
1.Self-confidence	1.Lack of self-confidence
2.Independency	2.Dependency
3.Cooperativeness	3.Egotism
4.Courteousness	4.Lack of courteousness
5.Patience	5.Lack of patience
6.Good understanding of others	6.Poor understanding of others
7.Bright and cheerful	7.Gloomy

TABLE 2 SUBJECTS

Group \ Sex	Male	Female	Total	Degree of social contacts $\bar{X}$	S.D.
Group A	34	11	45	7.04	2.65
Group B	35	10	45	7.67	3.07
Group C	28	17	45	8.27	3.06

TABLE 3

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE ON THE ATDP SCALE

Source	Sum of squares	df	MS	F
Rows(condition)	4367.8	2	2183.9	16.266**
Columns(individual)	17721.7	132	134.25	
Total	22089.5	134		**P<0.01